

## Students remain priority in merger of two-year colleges with UW-Stevens Point

Bernie Patterson, for USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin

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You may have seen reports about UW System restructuring UW Colleges and UW Extension. For UW-Stevens Point, this would mean aligning with UW-Marathon County and UW-Marshfield/Wood County.

UW-Stevens Point has had strong relationships with faculty, staff and the students they serve at the UW campuses in Wausau and Marshfield. We expect these partnerships will grow even stronger as we explore opportunities to link more seamlessly, enhance access and pursue our strategic goal of ensuring vibrant, healthy, prosperous and sustainable communities.

We already have a strong transfer program among our three campuses. This restructuring will make it seamless because students at Marshfield and Wausau campuses will already be UW-Stevens Point students. More students at UW Marathon County already transfer to UW-Stevens Point than any other university.

Like you, I have many questions. So do those who work, teach and learn at each of our UWs and UW Extension. To begin to address some of these questions and chart a course forward, I am forming a transition team, which will be finalized when the UW System Board of Regents takes action.

The Regents will consider the proposal Nov. 9. Pending their approval, this restructuring would be effective July 1, 2018.

While much remains unknown, we do know this: Our top priority throughout the transition will be what is best for our students. Regardless of campus location, we will prepare our students to be successful in the careers that await them. We will educate them to succeed professionally and personally, to be leaders in the workplace and their community.

Students and student government representatives will have an important role working with our Regional Campus Transition Committee. Led by Provost Greg Summers, vice chancellor for Academic Affairs; and Kristen Hendrickson, chief financial officer and vice chancellor for Business Affairs, the committee will include representatives of Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Business Affairs, University Communications and Marketing, faculty-staff and student governance, and representatives of the two-year campuses and those communities.

The committee and various project teams will explore such issues as student support, shared governance, informational technology, human resources, finances and enrollment management. We will seek input from all three campuses and the communities we serve. I look forward to meeting with business and local government leaders to hear your questions and suggestions.



As I mentioned in this space less than a month ago, UW-Stevens Point is already in the midst of a strategic planning process to ensure we are offering the programs students want, and to reallocate resources to meet emerging needs. All three UW campuses in central Wisconsin share enrollment challenges. We must ensure we are maintaining the services our students need to succeed.

We do see opportunities to develop new programs at all three campuses. We look to our campuses and communities to help us envision a future that best serves our students and our communities, a future in which our state would be proud to invest.

Forty years ago, former UW-Stevens Point Chancellor and Gov. Lee Sherman Dreyfus envisioned a "ruralplex," describing how central Wisconsin cities could work together. It is my hope our combined UW institutions will result in more than the sum of our parts.

*Bernie Patterson is the chancellor at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.*

<http://www.stevenspointjournal.com/story/news/local/2017/10/31/chancellor-uw-stevens-point-bernie-patterson-merger-two-year-colleges-uw-system/811351001/>